

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 SSM-03 IO-13 /079 W  
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 2443

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, LE  
SUBJECT: THE MURABITUN - STILL HANGING IN THERE

REF: 76 BEIRUT 8437

1. SUMMARY: THE MORNING AFTER THE LIKUD VICTORY IN ISRAEL, LEBANON'S NASSERISTS PERCEIVE THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE ARAB PEACE OFFENSIVE AND A FAILURE OF US MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS. THEY BELIEVE THE FAILURE OF THE CONSERVATIVE ARAB REGIMES TO SOLVE THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM WILL LEAD EVENTUALLY TO THEIR OVERTHROW. NEVERTHELESS, SYRIA MAY YET PLAY A GREAT ROLE AS CHAMPION OF THE ARAB AND PALESTINIAN CAUSE, PERHAPS BEGINNING BY NOT SEEKING TO APPLY THE "CAIRO ACCORD" IN LEBANON. THE KFUR FRONT, IN THE NASSERIST VIEW, IS INTRANSIGENT IN SEEKING WAYS TO DOMINATE ALL OF LEBANON, AND ITS YOUNGER LEADERS ARE MORE RADICAL THAN THE OLD. THE NASSERISTS STILL BELIEVE RAYMOND  
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EDDE'S CONSPIRACY THEORY ON LEBANON. SYRIAN EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH INFLUENCE WITHIN THE LEBANESE LEFT HAVE FAILED, AND THE LEFT IS HOLDING TOGETHER AND MAINTAINING ITS STRENGTH. KARAME IS KAMAL JUNBLATT'S MOST LIKELY SUCCESSOR. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF CALLED ON LEADERS OF THE INDEPENDENT NASSERIST MOVEMENT (MURABITUN) SAMIR SABBAGH, SINAN BARRAGH, AND DR.

WALID HAFIZ MAY 18 AT PARTY HEADQUARTERS IN THE MAZRAA DISTRICT OF WEST BEIRUT. THE THREE OF THEM, IT TURNED OUT, HAD ALL STUDIED AT USJ (JESUIT UNIVERSITY ST. JOSEPH), AND ALL SPOKE BOTH FRENCH AND ENGLISH. (THEIR LEADER, IBRAHIM QULAYLAT, SPEAKS NEITHER.) THE WAR-CRISIS ATMOSPHERE OF EARLIER CALLS WAS GONE; EVERYONE WAS RELAXED, AND THERE WAS NOT AN ARMED GUARD IN SIGHT.

3. LIKUD VICTORY IN ISRAEL. SABBAGH BELIEVES THAT THE VICTORY OF THE LIKUD PARTY IN THE ISRAELI GENERAL ELECTION MAY 17 DEMONSTRATES THE FUTILITY OF EFFORTS BY THE UNITED STATES AND THE CONSERVATIVE ARAB STATES TO FIND A POLITICAL SOLUTION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM. THIS RADICALIZATION OF ISRAEL'S POSITION (ASSUMING BEGAN IS TO BE ISRAEL'S NEW PRIME MINISTER) WILL HELP STIMULATE A REVOLUTIONARY TREND IN THE ARAB WORLD, PARTICULARLY IN THOSE STATES--EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA--MOST CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE U.S.

4. SYRIA AND APPLICATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORD. SINCE ISRAEL NOW IS GOING TO REJECT A COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT WITH THE PALESTINIANS, THE ROLE OF THE PLO AS AN ARMED FORCE, THAT IS, ITS ROLE IN LEBANON, ASSUMES NEW IMPORTANCE. SABBAGH EXPECTS THAT SYRIA ALSO WILL SEE IT THIS WAY, AND ACCORDINGLY WILL NOT ATTEMPT TO DISARM THE PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON.

5. KFUR FRONT OBJECTIVE. HAFIZ SAID IT WAS CLEAR THAT WHATEVER THE FORMULATION, THE BASIC MARONITE GOAL WAS TO DOMINATE THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN LEBANON. THE MARONITES STILL HOPE TO DOMINATE THE PRESENT LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, AND

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MAY BE SUCCEEDING. THE REPLACEMENT OF HANNA SAID BY VICTOR KHOURY AS ARMY COMMANDER WAS NOT A REAL TEST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INDEPENDENCE FROM THE KFUR FRONT, BUT RATHER A SIMPLE SHOW FOR EFFECT. KHOURY, TOO, HAD SUPPORTED THE KFUR FRONT, WHEN HE WAS COMMANDER OF THE NORTHERN DISTRICT IN JULY 1976, BY LEADING THE ATTACK OF THE LEBANESE ARMY AGAINST THE COMMON FRONT DIVERSIONARY OFFENSIVE IN THE CHEKKA AREA.

6. VIEWS OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS. THE MURABITUN LEADERS REGARD THE YOUNGER GENERATION OF KFUR FRONT LEADERSHIP AS MORE RADICAL AND INTRANSIGENT THAN THE OLDER GENERATION. DANY CHAMOUN IS "A MEGALOMANIAC." DORY IS A FANATIC. AMINE GEMAYEL SPEAKS MODERATELY IN PUBLIC BUT IS A CLOSET EXTREMIST. BECHIR GEMAYEL IS "SCHIZOPHRENIC" IN HIS INABILITY TO RECONCILE IN HIS MIND THE IDEA OF "LEBANON" AND HIS BASIC ATTACHMENT TO MARONITE HEGEMONY. KARIM PAKRADOUNI, UNLIKE THE OTHERS, IS REASONABLE AND INTELLIGENT, BUT HE HAS NO VISION OF THE FUTURE AND IN ANY CASE HAS NO POWER BASE WITHIN THE PHALANGE PARTY. AS A "CITY BOY" AND AN ARMENIAN, HE HAS LITTLE RAPPORT

WITH THE OBSTINATE MONTAGNARDS OF THE MARONITE HINTERLAND. IN SHORT, THERE IS SCARCELY ANYONE IN THE KFUR FRONT YOUNGER RANKS BOTH WORTH TALKING TO AND REASONABLE. NEVERTHELESS, SABBAGH MENTIONED THAT HE HAD TALKED BRIEFLY WITH PAKRADOUNI RECENTLY, AND THAT SOME REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, BUT NOT FRONT-RANK LEADERS, WOULD PARTICIPATE IN A "DIALOGUE" MEETING WITH SOME CHRISTIAN REPRESENTATIVES IN A FEW WEEKS IN GENEVA.

7. THE CONSPIRACY THEORY AND RAYMOND EDDE. AS HE HAD ON THE OCCASION OF EMBOFF'S FIRST MEETING WITH HIM IN NOVEMBER 1976, SABBAGH TROTTED OUT THE IDEA THAT THE US AND ISRAEL HAD A PLAN TO BALKANIZE NOT ONLY LEBANON BUT SYRIA AS WELL, IN ORDER TO DOMINATE THE AREA. HE SAID HE HAD RECENTLY BEEN IN PARIS, WHERE HE TALKED WITH RAYMOND EDDE, WHO STILL CLAIMED TO KNOW THIS WAS SO, PRIMARILY BASED ON SEVERAL MEETINGS THAT HE (EDDE) HAD HAD WITH VARIOUS AMERICANS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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WASHINGTON IN 1975. EMBOFF RESTATED THE USG POSITION IN SUPPORT OF LEBANESE NATIONAL UNITY, SAID THAT THE US EMBASSY HAD MADE INTENSIVE EFFORTS TO TELL MARONITE LEADERS THAT IT WAS NOT TRUE THAT THE US SUPPORTED OR WILL ACQUIESCE IN PARTITION, AND SAID THAT EDDE OUGHT TO SHOW BETTER EVIDENCE FOR HIS THESIS THAN MERE PERSONAL IMPRESSION. SINAN BARRAGH SAID HE WOULD BE VISITING EDDE IN PARIS IN A FEW WEEKS, WOULD QUESTION EDDE ABOUT HIS CLAIMS.

8. SYRIAN EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE THE LEFT. SINAN BARRAGH OBSERVED THAT THE SYRIANS WERE LOOKING FOR PROTEGES IN THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, HAD COME UP WITH ASSAM KANSO (PSP VICE PRESIDENT) AND KAMAL CHATILE (BAATH PARTY), BUT NEITHER OF THESE HAD RECENTLY SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED THEIR POPULAR POLITICAL SUPPORT IN LEBANON. THUS THE FUNDAMENTALLY REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER OF THE NM HAS BEEN PRESERVED.

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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-----201628Z 103452 /45

R 201354Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4104

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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9. CURRENT STATE OF THE MURABITUN. HAFIZ SAID THAT THE INDEPENDENT NASSERIST PARTY AND THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT GENERALLY HAD MAINTAINED THEIR STRENGTH AMONG THE PEOPLE OF WEST BEIRUT DESPITE THE SYRIAN OCCUPATION. SINCE THE MARONITES WERE NOT INTERESTED IN ANYTHING OTHER THAN FINDING A WAY TO CONTINUE TO DOMINATE THE COUNTRY, THERE WAS NOTHING TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT AT THE PRESENT TIME. EVEN KARIM PAKRADOUNI, OF THE PHALANGE, AFTER PARTICIPATING IN A RECENT MEETING SPONSORED BY LEFTIST NOTABLE HASSAN SAAB, HAD FELT CONSTRAINED TO MAKE CLEAR THAT HE WAS SPEAKING PERSONALLY, NOT FOR THE PHALANGE PARTY.

10. KARAME TO THE FORE. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE ASSASSINATION OF KAMAL JUNBLATT, BOTH SAEB SALAM AND RACHID KARAME WERE SEEKING TO ASSUME THE LEADERSHIP OF THE MOSLEMS AND LEFTISTS. KARAME RECOGNIZED THAT THE COMMUNISTS WERE A REAL POLITICAL FORCE WITH INTERESTS COMMON TO THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, AND WAS THEREFORE IN FAVOR OF INCLUDING THEM IN

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A NEW "NATIONAL FRONT" WHICH WOULD SPAN THE NM AND THE ISLAMIC GROUP. SALAM, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS A PUPPET OF THE SAUDIS, AND SHARED THEIR UNREASONING FEAR OF COMMUNISTS.

11. "WE LEAD THE PEOPLE." THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION, ALL THREE MURABITUN LEADERS REFLECTED THE CONVICTION THAT THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT STILL SPEAKS FOR THE COMMON PEOPLE OF WEST BEIRUT, IN SPITE OF THE SYRIAN OCCUPATION, IN SPITE OF THE DEFAMATIONS HEAPED ON THEM BY CONSERVATIVE MOSLEMS, SUCH AS SAEB SALAM, AND IN SPITE OF THE ASSASSINATION OF KAMAL JUNBLATT. THE GREAT RALLY ON MAY FIRST TO COMMEMORATE JUNBLATT DEMONSTRATED THEIR CONTINUING STRENGTH. THEY REFLECTED CONFIDENCE THAT THE LEFT WOULD REMAIN COHESIVE, ALTHOUGH ADMITTING PROBLEMS WITH SOME MORE CONFESSIONALLY

ORIENTED MOSLEM GROUPS.

12. COMMENT: THE MURABITUN REMAIN AN IDEOLOGICALLY COMMITTED PARTY. THEY STILL REGARD THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE AS THE CURRENT INCARNATION OF THE ARAB NATIONAL CAUSE. THEY STILL DREAM OF REVOLUTION, ESPITE THEIR OBVIOUS REVERSES OF RECENT MONTHS, AND REMAIN CONFIDENT OF THEIR UNDERLYING POLITICAL STRENGTH. THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS SYRIA'S ROLE-- IN LEBANON AND ELSE WHERE IN THE MIDDLE EAST--SEEMS AMBIGUOUS: DESPISING SYRIAN SUPPORT FOR THE KFUR FRONT DURING THE WAR AND WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS CONTINUED COOPERATION AFTER THE WAR, THEY SEEM TO HOPE AT THE SAME TIME THAT IT WILL YET PLAY A GREAT HISTORIC ROLE AS FORGER OF THE ARAB NATION.

13. IT IS IRONIC AND SAD TO HEAR THE ATTITUDE OF THESE YOUNG SUNNI MOSLEM LEADERS TOWARDS A DIALOGUE WITH THEIR CHRISTIAN COUNTERPARTS, WHOM THEY CLAIM ARE NOT WORTH TALKING TO BECAUSE THEY ARE UNREASONABLE FANATICS. THE CHRISTIANS, OF COURSE, TAKE THE SAME POSITION, ASSERTING THAT THESE YOUNG MUSLIMS DO NOT TRULY REPRESENT ANY SIGNIFICANT BODY OF LEBANESE OPINION AND ARE NOT REALLY "LEBANESE."  
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## Message Attributes

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